

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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TAGS: PGOV, PDEV, NI
SUBJECT: SHARIA: OBASANJO TO ADDRESS THE CA

1. IN A FRONTPAGE STORY, APRIL 19 DAILY TIMES

REPORTS THAT FMG HEAD OF STATE OBASANJO WILL ADDRESS A SPECIAL SESSION OF THE CA TODAY. ACCORDING TO THE TIMES STORY, CA CHAIRMAN UDOMA ANNOUNCED THE SPEECH TO MCA'S BEFORE THE ASSEMBLY ADJOURNED REGULAR SESSIONS YESTERDAY FOR THREE DAYS. THE SECRETARY OF THE ASSEMBLY, ALHAJI GIDADO IDRIS, CONFIRMED THAT AN OFFICIAL LETTER INVITING ALL 230 MCA'S TO THE SPECIAL SESSION HAD BEEN SENT OUT BY THE CHIEF OF STATE. ADDITIONAL PRESS REPORTS INDICATE THAT POLICE INSPECTOR GENERAL M. D. YUSSUF SPOKE WITH MCA'S YESTERDAY URGING RESTRAINT IN PUBLIC STATEMENTS.

2. THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE OBASANJO SPECIAL ADDRESS COINCIDED WITH THE ISSUANCE OF A STATEMENT BY 93 NORTHERN MCA'S WHICH DEMANDED THAT THE CA

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REOPEN THE SHARIA ISSUE. THE NORTHERN STATEMENT, WHICH WAS DISTRIBUTED IN THE CORRIDORS AFTER YESTERDAY'S ADJOURNMENT, SAID THAT THE NORTHERNERS COULD NOT JUSTIFY A RETURN TO THE CA AT THIS TIME AND CONDEMNED THE MEMBERS OF THE 'RUMP' CA FOR CONTINUING WITHOUT THEM. THE STATEMENT POINTED OUT THAT MCA'S NOW OUTSIDE THE

ASSEMBLY REPRESENT 'MORE THAN 50 PERCENT OF THE REGISTERED VOTERS OF THE COUNTRY AND AT LEAST 50 PERCENT OF THE NATIONAL POPULATION.' FYI: IT IS INTERESTING THAT THE NORTHERN CLAIM TO HAVE A MAJORITY IS BASED UPON THE RECENTLY COMPLETED VOTER REGISTRATION EXERCISE RATHER THAN UPON THE TRADITIONAL BASIS OF THE 1963 CENSUS. END FYI

3. AS CONDITIONS FOR RETURNING TO THE CA, THE NORTHERNERS STATED THE FOLLOWING:

"THE RUMP OF THE ASSEMBLY MUST RECOGNIZE AND AFFIRM THE CONSENSUAL APPROACH TO OUR WORK. THIS ALONE CAN ENSURE THAT NOTHING OF FUNDAMENTAL IMPORTANCE TO THE LIFE OF ANY NIGERIAN COMMUNITY IS IGNORED OR GIVEN THE SORT OF PARTIAL RECOGNITION WHICH UNDERMINES IT ALTOGETHER.

"IN THE LIGHT OF OUR WITHDRAWAL AND THE INCOMPLETE KNOWLEDGE OF OUR COLLEAGUES ON BASIC FACTS REGARDING THE SHARIA AND THE LIFE IN RELEVANT PARTS OF THE COUNTRY, ALL DELIBERATIONS OF THE RUMP ASSEMBLY AS FROM SECTION 180 SUB-SECTION I(C), MUST BE SET ASIDE AS IRREGULAR AND INVALID.

"OUR VIEW IS SUPPORTED BY THE FACT THAT SINCE

OUR WITHDRAWAL ON THURSDAY, APRIL 6, 1978, THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ASSEMBLY HAS NEVER HAD A QUORUM. TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, 'FULL HOUSE' HAS FLUCTUATED BETWEEN 45 AND 80 MEMBERS, WHILE THE LEGAL QUORUM IS 115. EVEN IF THERE HAD BEEN A QUORUM, IT CANNOT BE EITHER A MORALLY OR POLITICALLY REALISTIC QUORUM, GIVEN THE FACT AND SCALE OF THE WITHDRAWAL.

"BEFORE THE DRAFT CONSTITUTION BILL GOES INTO ITS THIRD READING, ALL MATERS AS FROM SECTION 180 SUB-SECTION I(C) HAVE TO BE RE-OPENED NOT ONLY BECAUSE OF THE WITHDRAWAL AND THE WEAKNESSES IN THE QUORUM, BUT ALSO BECAUSE WE CANNOT SEE HOW DECISIONS AFFECTING MILLIONS OF NIGERIANS CAN BE MADE ACCEPTABLE WHEN TAKEN IN THE ABSENCE OF THEIR REPRESENTATIVES. WE FOR OUR PART CANNOT RETURN MERELY TO VALIDATE AN UNACCEPTABLE IRREGULARITY."

4. THE HARDNESS OF THE NORTHERN STATEMENT IS DEMONSTRATED IN ITS CHARGE THAT THE CA ITSELF IS 'NOT DEMOCRATICALLY COMPOSED.' WITH 95 OUT OF 190 ELECTED SEATS ALLOCATED ON THE BASIS OF STATE EQUALITY, THE STATEMENT COMMENTED THAT 'AN

ARTIFICIAL AND FREAK ASSEMBLY MAJORITY
UNRELATED TO THE REALITY IN THE COUNTRY' HAD
BEEN CREATED. THE NORTHERNERS ADD THAT THEY
HAD NOT MADE AN ISSUE OF IT FROM THE OUTSET
BECAUSE THEY HAD ASSUMED THAT DECISIONS WOULD
BE MADE BY CONSENSUS.

5. COMMENT: THE DENOUEMENT ON SHARIA IN THE CA
IS CLEARLY COMING. IF THE HEAD OF STATE IS TO ADDRESS
THE CA TODAY, IT MUST REFLECT AN ASSESSMENT
WITHIN THE FMG THAT THE DRIFT MUST BE STOPPED. IT WOULD
ALSO REFLECT AN ASSESSMENT THAT THE CA CAN NO LONGER FIND
A SOLUTION WITHIN ITSELF FOR THE ISSUE, A CONDITION
PERHAPS CONFIRMED IN THE NORTHERN STATEMENT.
END COMMENT.

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